

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The following is a complete listing of revised claims with a status identifier in parenthesis.

### **LISTING OF CLAIMS**

1.-50. (Previously Cancelled)

51.-67. (Cancelled)

68. (New) A sound masking system for controlling the ambient noise in a physical environment, said sound masking system comprising:

a communication network in said physical environment;

a plurality of sound masking units including a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for receiving one or more control signals over said communication network including a masking volume signal and a masking frequency signal, at least some of said sound masking units including a sound masking component, said sound masking component being responsive to said one or more control signals for generating a sound masking output signal;

a control unit configured to generate said one or more control signals including said masking volume signal and said masking frequency signal, and said control unit having a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for transmitting said one or more control signals to selectively control operation of said plurality of sound masking units.

69. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 68, wherein said sound masking unit includes an address component for recognizing control signals intended for the sound masking unit associated with said address component.

70. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 69, wherein said control unit includes an address generator for assigning addresses associated with the address component for each of said sound masking units.

71. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 70, wherein said address generator comprises a component for generating a logical address for each of said sound masking units.

72. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 68, wherein said plurality of sound masking units are connected in series in said communication network.

73. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 72, wherein each of said plurality of sound masking units includes a first interface and a second interface, said first interface interfacing with an upstream side of said communication network, and said second interface interfacing with a downstream side of said communication network.

74. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 68, wherein said plurality of sound masking units are associated with a plurality of sound masking zones, each of said sound masking units being associated with one of said plurality of sound masking zones, and said sound masking units providing sound masking for said associated sound masking zone independently of said other sound masking zones.

75. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 74, wherein said sound masking units associated with each of said sound masking zones provide a sound masking output tailored for said associated sound masking zone and said sound masking output being based on said masking volume and said masking frequency signals.

76. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 68, further comprising a plurality of zones, and one or more of said sound masking units being associated with one or more of said zones.

77. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 76, wherein said zones include one or more of a sound masking zone, a non-masking zone, a timer zone, and a keypad zone.

78. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 68, further including a remote unit, and said control unit having a remote communication interface for receiving adjustment signals from said remote unit, and said control unit including a component for converting said

adjustment signals into one or more control signals for controlling said sound masking output signal.

79. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 78, wherein said remote unit includes a component for receiving sound measurements and generating said adjustment signals based on said received sound measurements.

80. (New) A sound masking system for controlling the ambient noise in a physical environment, said sound masking system comprising:

- a control communication network in said physical environment;
- a plurality of sound masking units, at least some of said sound masking units including a controller and a communication interface for coupling to said control communication network for receiving one or more control signals over said control communication network, and said controller being responsive to said one or more control signals for generating a sound masking signal and said one or more control signals including a masking volume signal and a masking frequency signal;

- a control unit configured to generate said one or more control signals including said masking control signal and said masking frequency signal, and said control unit having a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for sending said control signals to selectively control operation of said plurality of sound masking units.

81. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 80, wherein said sound masking unit includes a communication interface for transmitting one or more signals to said control unit over said control communication network.

82. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 81, wherein said sound masking unit includes an address component for recognizing control signals intended for the sound masking unit associated with said address component.

83. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 80, wherein said plurality of sound masking units are associated with a plurality of sound masking zones, each of said sound masking units being associated with one of said plurality of sound masking zones, and said sound masking units providing sound masking for said associated sound masking zone independently of said other sound masking zones.

84. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 83, wherein said sound masking units associated with each of said sound masking zones provide a sound masking output tailored for said corresponding sound masking zone and said sound masking output being based on said masking volume signal or said masking frequency signal.

85. (New) A sound masking system for controlling the ambient noise in a physical environment, said sound masking system comprising:

a control communication network in said physical environment;

a plurality of sound masking units, at least some of said sound masking units including a controller having a component for generating a sound masking output signal and a communication interface for coupling to said control communication network for receiving and transmitting control information over said control communication network, and said control information including address information identifying one or more of said sound masking units, and said controller being responsive to said control information addressed to said associated sound masking unit for controlling said sound masking output signal

a control unit configured to generate said control information including said address information, and said control unit having a communication interface for coupling to said control communication network for transmitting said control information to selectively control operation of said plurality of sound masking units.

86. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 85, wherein said control information includes a sound masking volume command and a sound masking frequency command.

87. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 86, wherein said plurality of sound masking units are associated with a plurality of sound masking zones, each of said sound masking units being associated with one of said plurality of sound masking zones, and said sound masking units

providing sound masking for said associated sound masking zone independently of said other sound masking zones.

88. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 87, wherein each of said plurality of sound masking zones is configured according to control information generated by said control unit and transmitted to said plurality of sound masking units over said control communication network.

89. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 88, wherein said sound masking units associated with each of said sound masking zones provide a sound masking output tailored for said associated sound masking zone and said sound masking output being based on said sound masking volume command and said sound masking frequency command.

90. (New) A method for selectively controlling a plurality of sound masking units, said plurality of sound masking units being configured in a control communication network and having an interface for receiving a plurality of control commands over said control communication network, said method comprising the steps of:

monitoring said control communication network and receiving a message addressed to one of said sound masking units;

interpreting said received message; and

generating a sound masking signal having one or more characteristics based on said interpreted message.

91. (New) The method as claimed in claim 90, wherein said interpreted message comprises a sound masking volume message.

92. (New) The method as claimed in claim 91, wherein said interpreted message comprises a sound masking frequency message.

93. (New) The method as claimed in claim 92, further including the step of configuring a plurality of said sound masking units into one or more zones, and controlling said sound masking units for said corresponding sound masking zones to generate sound masking signal outputs independently of said other sound masking zones.

94. (New) The method as claimed in claim 93, wherein said step of controlling comprises transmitting said sound masking volume and said sound masking frequency messages to said plurality of sound masking units associated with each of said sound masking zones using address information.

95. (New) A networkable sound masking device comprising:  
an interface for interfacing to a network;  
a controller for receiving one or more control signals from said interface, said one or more control signals being intended for the networkable sound masking device and said one or more control signals comprising a masking volume signal and a masking frequency signal;



a sound masking component for generating a sound masking output signal, said sound masking component being responsive to said controller and said sound masking output signal being responsive to said masking volume signal or said masking frequency signal;

an output stage for outputting said sound masking signal.

96. (New) The networkable sound masking device as claimed in claim 95, wherein said interface includes an address component for recognizing said one or more control signals intended for the networkable sound masking device.

97. (New) The networkable sound masking device as claimed in claim 95, wherein said output stage comprises an amplifier and said controller including a component for controlling said output stage in response to said masking volume signal.

98. (New) The networkable sound masking device as claimed in claim 95, wherein said sound masking component comprises a random noise generator having an output coupled to an equalizer stage, and said controller including a component for controlling said equalizer stage in response to said masking frequency signal.

99. (New) The networkable sound masking device as claimed in claim 98, wherein said output stage comprises an amplifier and said controller

including a component for controlling said output stage in response to said masking volume signal.

100. (New) A sound masking system for controlling the ambient noise in a physical environment, said sound masking system comprising:

a communication network for said physical environment;

a plurality of sound masking units, at least some of said sound masking units including a sound masking generator and a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for receiving one or more control signals over said communication network including a masking volume signal and a masking frequency signal, and said sound masking generator being responsive to said masking volume signal and said sound masking frequency signal for generating a sound masking output signal;

a control unit configured to generate said one or more control signals including said masking volume signal and said masking frequency signal, and said control unit having a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for transmitting said one or more control signals to selectively control operation of said plurality of sound masking units;

a plurality of zones, and one or more of said sound masking units being associated with one or more of said zones.

101. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 100, wherein said zones include one or more of a sound masking zone, a non-masking zone, a timer zone, and a keypad zone.

102. (New) A sound masking system for masking sound in a physical environment, said sound masking system comprising:

a communication network for said physical environment;

a plurality of sound masking units, at least some of said sound masking units including a sound masking generator and a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for receiving a plurality of control signals over said communication network including a masking volume signal and a masking frequency signal, and said sound masking generator being responsive to said masking volume signal and said sound masking frequency signal for generating a sound masking output signal, said sound masking output signal having a volume derived from said masking volume signal and a frequency characteristic derived from said sound masking frequency signal;

a control unit configured to generate said control signals including said masking volume signal and said masking frequency signal, and said control unit having a communication interface for coupling to said communication network for transmitting said control signals to selectively control operation of said plurality of sound masking units.

103. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 102, wherein said sound masking unit includes an address component for recognizing control signals intended for the sound masking unit associated with said address component.

104. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 102, wherein said plurality of sound masking units are associated with a plurality of sound masking zones, each of said sound masking units being associated with one of said plurality of sound masking zones, and said sound masking units providing sound masking for said associated sound masking zone independently of said other sound masking zones.

105. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 104, wherein said sound masking units associated with each of said sound masking zones provide a sound masking output tailored for said associated sound masking zone and said sound masking output being based on said masking volume and said masking frequency signals.

106. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 102, further comprising a plurality of zones, and one or more of said sound masking units being associated with one or more of said zones.

107. (New) The sound masking system as claimed in claim 106, wherein said zones includes one or more of a sound masking zone, a timer zone, and a keypad zone.